THE SHAKERITE

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COVID crushed our work ethic

pg. 6

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Did We Do It All For Nothing?

Once again, students have ignored school policies out of existence

Students: When was the last time you wore your ID around your neck and stowed your phone in a Yondr pouch? And teachers: When was the last time you reminded a student to do those things?

Two policies the high school has on-and-off enforced are now virtually nonexistent, apart from the half-hearted Yondr pouch check during crew periods. It was big news when the school announced that cell phones would be banned for the 2024-25 school year — the ensuing outrage and spite among students amounted to a whole lot of struggle and not a whole lot of results. The tedious morning entrance line would stall every time a phone was discovered and pouched; arguments between students disobeying the policy and teachers trying to enforce it were frequent; there were stretches for months when the administration seemed to forget about their policy, then overnight would claim to redouble their efforts and crack down on offenders of the phone ban.

DANIEL CARROLL
Managing Editor

Today, you could not show me a single student who doesn't discreetly have a calculator or burner phone tucked away in their Yondr pouch.

The state of the ID policy is even sadder. If you remember, the reason for the policy was that two intruders entered an unsecured north gym door on Jan. 11, 2024, walked undetected all the way to the cafeteria and attacked a student. We had dangerous people roaming the halls, the type of people we have lockdown drills for. The administration recognized this danger, and the effort was underway to ensure students would display IDs, which were first distributed in October 1997.

A Jan. 19, 2024 Shakerite editorial praised the new enforcement and intensification of the existing ID policy, which had been published in the student handbook in 2018 but never successfully enforced. After the intruder incident, the editorial stated, "no student will be allowed to enter the building without wearing an ID, and any student discovered without an ID will be removed from the building. Students also may not be issued a hall pass if they are not wearing their ID."

Unlike Yondr pouches, this was not a policy students could casually circumvent: Either they had their ID, or they didn't. And yet, here we are today, when a student actually presenting their ID badge is a surprising sight.

Gone are the days of teachers calling out to a student in the hallway, motioning for an ID to be donned and a phone to be stowed away. Just a couple of weeks ago, I walked into the restroom and took out my phone. A security guard followed me in, nodded indifferently at my device, and said, "At least you've only got it out in here." It's effortless for students to break the rules now; we just have to do nothing, and nothing will be done to us.

Students no longer care. Teachers no longer care. The administration doesn't seem to care, either. Time, stress and money were poured into Yondr pouch and ID acquisition and enforcement, and now all that's left are a few stragglers with that red ribbon hanging from their neck. As soon as students push back, the administration seems to just hang its head and raise the white flag.

I, too, am a victim of the fatigue that has gripped the school; it couldn't matter less to me whether the administration doubles down on the phone and ID policies, or continues to disregard them.

A Shakerite photo published Jan. 8, 2021 depicts one of hundreds of decals affixed to district building floors to instruct students about social distancing in the hallways. Freshmen toured the high school Jan. 15 that year, the day before hybrid instruction began.

In This Issue

6-9
Post-COVID Slump

Nearly six years after COVID-19 forced students and teachers home for school, the pandemic is still shaping how teachers plan, if students show up and whether they complete assignments.

3
15 or More
Teachers worry that more required classes and an enrollment limit threaten electives.

4
Tax Relief
Developers build, but only when the city agrees to reduce their property taxes.

8
Angling
English teacher Chris Cotton wants more parking spots for students, and he has a plan.

9
DJT Reno
The President spills the details of his big, beautiful SHHS ballroom project.

14-15
ROM
December Raiders of the Month. Which plays Billy Joel on the harmonica?

On the Cover

ALISON TEETER
Design Managing Editor

Generative AI rode off the back of the pandemic, catching us at our laziest.

ChatGPT was released in November 2022, one year after we fully returned to school in person. Teachers were already grappling with students' new perception that schoolwork "didn't really matter," as freshman Mason Henroch commented in this issue's centerpiece on page six, and then in came this new, free-to-use software that trivialized the work.

As the demand for AI boomed among students, so too did the power of companies like OpenAI, furthering the influence of AI and creating a positive feedback loop of students doing less and less work and AI models getting better and better by doing it for them.

AI was always going to be used to cheat in school (cheaters gonna cheat), but the wave of educational apathy brought about by the pandemic — in tandem with legislators capable of regulating AI being bankrolled by tech-bro billionaires — created the perfect breeding ground for the rapid, uncontrolled rise of generative AI seen over the last three years.

REQUIRED COURSES ENDANGER ELECTIVES

EMMA BARKER
Policy Reporter

As students and teachers adjust to schedule changes and declining enrollment, Scott Sumerak, Christina Stouffer and Keaf Holliday are among teachers who face a familiar concern: whether their elective classes will survive next year's course-evaluation cycle or be cut.

Under the district's current approach, classes with fewer than 15 students enrolled are at risk of being cut unless they meet other criteria related to graduation pathways such as the IB Diploma Programme and Career Tech Education. If a course is vital to the district's strategic plan, culturally significant, and/or the class can be combined with another class, it may also be sustained.

Sumerak, who teaches Theatre Exploration, Stagecraft and Design, Theatre Management and Acting Ensemble, said the district should not begin with enrollment when evaluating classes. "The starting point should be: Is this class required for a graduation pathway? Does it matter culturally or historically to the school?" he said. "Fifteen kids shouldn't be the first question."

Stouffer, who teaches three Ceramics 1 classes, two Ceramics 2 classes, and three split classes, said that decisions based only on numbers can miss the full picture of what a class offers students. "The 15-students minimum is a data point. A lot of decisions are made by looking at data, but sometimes there are other things you have to think of first when evaluating a class, like what students gain from arts classes. Not everything meaningful fits neatly on an enrollment chart," she said.

Holliday, who teaches Art Exploration, Illustration and Digital Design 1, IB Illustration and Digital Design 2 and IB Animation Video Editing, said that IB courses, including those he teaches, require smaller class sizes. "If you have IB students in a class, you have to honor the IB curriculum," he said.

Holliday said that while changes are inevitable, the goal is to ensure the arts remain strong in the long term. "I'm optimistic. As long as we keep adapting, and the district listens to what students' need, the arts will stay an essential part of this school," he said.

Under the previous block-schedule format, which comprised eight class periods, students had more opportunities to fit elective classes into their day. "The biggest shift came when the district moved from block scheduling to an every-day schedule," Sumerak said. With the change this year to an every class, every day schedule, a period was removed, reducing the number of electives students could fit into their schedules.

Another limiting factor is the requirement that freshmen must take Health and a physical education class during freshman year. These semester courses, taken consecutively, occupy one of the seven class slots. A state requirement, Financial Literacy, is typically taken in 10th grade, and SHHS students must earn an additional P.E. credit before graduating. These mandatory courses make it harder for an elective class to find space in a student's schedule.

Juniors Nina Yacovone and Noa Hollander, and senior Taylor Boland craft in 9th period Ceramics class.

"It's not that students don't want to take theater classes. It's that they don't have the space to take theater classes. Last year I had 42 students in Stagecraft," Sumerak said. "This year I have four. The class didn't suddenly get worse; students just don't have the room in their schedules."

A 15-student requirement means that elective classes with low enrollment may be cut. Sumerak said he worries that the district risks losing parts of its identity if arts classes begin to disappear. "These programs are what make a student feel like they belong," he said. "They're where students find their voice."

Uncertainty about course offerings isn't new. "We all feel like we're constantly a cat on a hot tin roof. You're always waiting to see if next year's classes will run," Sumerak said.

Stouffer said that a schedule that limits elective periods creates a bottleneck of what students can sign up for. "Sometimes the interest is absolutely there," Stouffer said. "But if students can't fit the class into their schedule, their hands are tied."

"There are students who want to be here," Holliday said. "But their academic plan pulls them in 10 different directions." Students in AP or IB tracks, he added, often have even less flexibility. Students enrolled in the full IB diploma track, for example, are required to take six IB courses.

The district does not always replace teachers who retire, a practice known as attrition and that puts all the more pressure on electives. Holliday, who will retire after this school year, said enrollment challenges stem from a smaller student body overall. "It's not that the district doesn't support the arts. We just don't have as many students as we did in 2001," he said.

According to the 2004 Auditor of State report, 5,625 students were enrolled across the district in 2001. According to the district's Oct. 9 enrollment update presented to the Board of Education, 4,188 students were enrolled in the district on Sept. 19.

The digital design program comprises three tiers: IDD 1, IDD 2 and IDD 3. If enrollment drops further, some courses may be combined or restructured. "We might have to blend traditional drawing with digital art, or combine design levels," Holliday said.

Stouffer said ceramics class enrollment has remained stable, but even strong classes feel vulnerable when electives are evaluated year by year. "There's always concern," she said. "But Shaker has always supported the arts, and I really feel that support."

What keeps digital design courses stable, Holliday said, is partly the IB program, which allows for smaller class sizes and offers college credit opportunities. "The IB program is important for keeping some of these classes alive," he said. "It gives students a pathway that's recognized beyond high school."

To keep numbers up, Holiday said the Art Department presents its courses to all art students during scheduling season to spark interest. He said he meets with students who show interest in digital media.

Stouffer recruits students to continue into higher-level ceramics. She also helps students who want to take a ceramics elective figure out how the class might fit into their schedule if they don't have any more room.

Sumerak is rewriting the theatre course catalog with his Theatre Management students and visiting classrooms to make sure ninth graders understand the theatre class options before scheduling starts. "If we want the program to live, we have to make sure students know what's here," he said. He plans to extend recruiting efforts to the middle school.

Despite the outreach, Sumerak worries about what could happen if enrollment continues to decline. "This program is part of Shaker's identity," he said. "If it were cut, we'd be telling students their art form doesn't matter. And that's not the message we want to send."

Said Sumerak, "We adapt. We problem-solve. We rebuild. Because once a class is gone, it's gone, and these programs matter too much to lose."

Shakerite Reporters Ruth Becker, Addie Dunno and Ethan Scheer contributed to this story.

THE SHAKERITE

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Volume 96, Issue 3

A rendering by RDL Architects illustrates the mixed-use retail and housing development Arcadia, which is set to open in 2026. According to Director of Economic Development Laura Englehart, the side of the building facing Warrensville will include retail, and the side facing Farnsleigh will include apartments. .

RDL Architects

A HEFTY INCENTIVE FOR PROGRESS

Developers of a new project in the city will pay modified tax on property improvements

DANIEL CARROLL
Managing Editor

Construction of the mixed-use retail and housing development Arcadia is underway at 3393 Warrensville Center Road, but the district will not fully benefit from the property tax it generates.

The 2.4 acre chunk of land across from Shaker Rocks was once the site of a Buick dealership and has been an empty lot since 2015. The development is set to open in 2026 and will be the home to 250,000 square feet comprising 141 housing units and 15,000 square feet of retail and office space.

According to Laura Englehart, director of economic development in Shaker Heights, Arcadia's developer, Metropolitan Holdings, will be paying a version of tax called a TIF, or tax increment finance agreement. The developers will pay the full tax for building on the land, but their tax payments for improvements will be in the form of PILOTS, or payments in lieu of taxes.

Those PILOTs will be paid to the city, then 82 percent of that money will be returned to the developer. The remaining 18 percent of the PILOT will be distributed to Shaker Heights schools. This arrangement will continue for 30 years.

TIFs are a type of tax abatement. Tax abatements exempt developers, or homeowners, from having to pay taxes on their property, or reduce the amount of taxes paid, for a set period of time, in order to propel economic development. So, if a new property in a particular city is expected to generate large streams of revenue from renting homes or housing businesses, the owner of that property may be given a tax abatement by the city as encouragement to build it there.

Englehart said that the length of the Arcadia TIF agreement and the amount returned to the developer is based on the cost of construction and loans borrowed for the development.

"The developer is taking out significant loans to construct the project, and without the payments in lieu of taxes, they wouldn't have been able to construct the project," Englehart said.

In November, Shaker Heights voters approved Issue 51, a 9.9-mill operating levy to be used for funding day-to-day operations of the schools. The levy will increase property taxes for homeowners by several hundred dollars per year.

"Economic development is really critical for the future of our city and for how we're planning for our continued success," Englehart said. "Some of that development cannot be done without these incentives."

Superintendent David Glasner said that the overall economic development of the community is in everyone's interest. "We work closely on these issues with the city as part of the Forward Together initiative, and the city is supportive of the school district on issues related to our future growth and well being. We review a variety of tax abatement requests and our Board of Education, when required, takes action on these requests," he said.

Englehart said that prior to Arcadia construction, the vacant lot had generated no tax revenue, and Arcadia will come with several benefits, including "added vitality, new housing options, some affordability included in our housing costs, continuing the expansion of the Van Aken district, attracting and retaining our residents. All of the benefits I've mentioned would not be attained at all [without the TIF], and we are creating new revenues in the process. The full property tax revenue will not be realized until the term of the incentive ends, but it would not have happened without the TIF."

"The full property tax revenue will not be realized until the term of the incentive ends, but it would not have happened without the TIF."

Laura Englehart

The 82/18 percent split was worked out with Metropolitan Holdings after the city sent out a request for proposals outlining objectives for the development, and received proposals in turn from development firms.

"When Metropolitan was selected, they were very upfront about how they would have to put the financials for the project together, and it would likely require a gap-filing subsidy," Englehart said. "And so we looked at their numbers and what that gap was, and how the city could assist in filling that gap by providing the TIF."

According to Englehart, Metropolitan Holdings' design for Arcadia will include 141 housing units, 25 of which will be set aside for homeowners earning 80 to 100 percent of Shaker's $97,721 median household income in 2023. Eighty percent of the city's 2023 median income is $78,176. The building will include a parking garage on the first floor and office space on the second floor, some of which will be assigned to the architect of the project.

Said Englehart, "This project is going to add significant amenities and continue to increase the vitality of the Van Aken district, and add new housing options for our residents. We're excited that we're able to support those projects and the future of our community."

SLIFKIN LEADS SHHS TO BRONZE AGE

AP promotes PBIS efforts, and state recognizes gains

MAIZY MACHMER-WESSELS
Assistant Raider Zone Editor

Assistant Principal Katie Slifkin speaks to a student in the library during ninth period Dec. 8. Slifken targeted a bronze PBIS rating when school began. *Maizy Machmer-Wessels*

For the first time, the high school placed in the bronze category for PBIS, an achievement led by Assistant Principal Katie Slifkin.

According to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "PBIS is a program for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. Ohio schools and districts are responsible for creating a positive school environment where each student can thrive and reach their potential. PBIS is a framework that guides school teams in the selection, integration and implementation of evidence-based practices for improving academic, social and behavior outcomes for all students."

Slifkin, who has worked at the high school since 2023, said that she is thrilled that SHHS accomplished its goal by earning this award. "It was a pretty big deal, pretty exciting, and it's essentially all things culture and acknowledging and celebrating," she said.

She emphasized how important PBIS is to the school.

"This system recognizes those who meet expectations, provides supports and interventions on an individual level for students who need targeted support, and allows us all to learn in an environment that is safe, fun and effective," she said.

Because SHHS earned bronze this year, the school is eligible to earn silver next year. "You have to earn bronze before you can earn silver before you can earn gold," Slifkin said.

As PBIS coordinator, some of Slifkin's responsibilities include recording student videos at the beginning of the year about being respectful and responsible, and acknowledging students for exemplifying these attributes.

Slifkin organizes prizes for students who demonstrate these characteristics within the high school.

"Every week we have PBIS shout out, in which teachers input student names for being responsible, respectful and safe, and then every week we do a drawing," Slifkin said.

She sends staff a weekly email titled, "STOP, DROP AND SHOUT OUT!" Teachers enter names of students they want to recognize, and the reasons why they deserve a shout out. Students whose names are drawn receive a $5 gift card.

PBIS also supports the high school's new Sources of Strength group. The national program promotes mental wellbeing, suicide prevention and community throughout schools. Guidance counselor Cathy Szendrey organized the high school's Sources of Strength effort, which launched in October.

PBIS and Sources of Strength collaborate to organize spirit events at the high school. "PBIS is who supports our Sources of Strength group in partnership to come up with the spirit weeks and the pep rallies," Slifkin said.

Slifkin went to high school in Youngstown. She was a middle school science teacher in Pinellas County, Florida for seven years before becoming an administrator there.

After five years in that role, she moved back to Ohio and was drawn to work in Shaker Heights because of the welcoming environment and the students.

"The staff is willing to come together, try new things, do whatever it takes for kids," she said.

"The staff is amazing with utilizing the PBIS shoutout Google Sheet to recognize students for being responsible, respectful and safe. They were also willing to collaborate and utilize valuable class time during our staggered start to explicitly teach expectations through the use of student-created videos and admin-created lessons," she said.

"Shaker has an amazing family feel, and PBIS is just one of many amazing layers making our community so great."

Katie Slifkin

"When it comes to things like spirit weeks, the pep rally, Sources of Strength — I invite staff to provide feedback and participate, and they are all in with a smile on their face."

"Shaker has an amazing family feel," she said, "and PBIS is just one of many amazing layers making our community so great."

Assistant Principal Logan Cawley said that he appreciates Slifkin's passion for her job. "Ms. Slifkin is an outstanding educator who is dedicated to student-centered practices, and she is deeply passionate about supporting our Sources of Strength program and building policies around PBIS," Cawley said.

Slifkin said she enjoys her job because of students. "Interacting with the kids, watching you guys grow, seeing kids go from shy, not-so-sure freshmen to really, upbeat, driven" people, she said, who "have these goals and then go get them."

THE SHAKERITE

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Volume 96, Issue 3

Photo Illustration by Emma Barker

POST-COVID SLUMP

Nearly six years later, students are feeling the effect of the pandemic

CHARLIE HOWELL, ISABEL SIEGEL & LUCAS TCHEUREKDJIAN
Spotlight Reporter, Editor in Chief & Spotlight Editor

Almost six years after the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted classrooms, Shaker students and teachers say that academic and social habits are fundamentally transformed.

The pandemic forced an immediate transition to remote instruction. The last day of in-person learning occurred March 13, 2020. Following a three-week shutdown of schools for an "extended spring break," online classes began after Governor Mike Dewine extended closures to May 1 and subsequently the rest of the academic year due to concerns over the rapid spread of coronavirus. Homes doubled as classrooms, and parents acted as co-teachers. Sophomore Emma Dean said that she spent much of that time drifting away from academic work. "I just hung out with my friends and played Roblox all day," she said. "I had no motivation because I would just play Roblox in my closet."

Evangeline Luna, a sophomore, said being at home disrupted school. "It definitely messed with my learning and how I understood things because I had to learn by myself, and that was kind of hard and it wasn't as serious," she said.

During virtual learning, math teacher Courtney Lindsay said that she still used most of her in-person teaching methods, including hand-writing notes. "I always have kids write in notebooks and kind of draw things themselves. So that part didn't have to change because I wasn't providing a handout anyway," she said. Lindsay that she would occasionally make students turn on their screens and show her their notes. "Most people were pretty cooperative," she said.

Psychology teacher Victoria Berndt said that she transitioned many lesson resources onto HyperDocs for easy accessibility. HyperDocs are interactive, digital lesson plans on Google Docs that teachers can create to centralize learning materials. "We tried to transition it into these HyperDocs while also trying to really make things that were more person-to-person interactive, because we knew that the kids were going to miss that element," Berndt said. "What we didn't expect was there was no mandate to turn on cameras. So what we ended up with was cool ideas, but no participants."

Freshman Mason Henoch said his early remote learning days were marked by interruptions and unpredictability. "I did online learning in fourth and fifth grade. The learning experience felt really random and inconsistent, from internet problems to my teachers constantly telling others to turn their camera on," Henoch said.

Berndt said that during Zoom learning, few of her students interacted, and most kept their cameras off. "Out of all [my] classes, I think I knew the faces of two students," she said.

Hybrid learning began Jan. 19, 2021 at the high school. Attending school in person was optional. Students whose families chose for them to return to in-person learning were assigned to one of two groups based upon last names. One group attended class onsite on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the other on Thursdays and Fridays. They logged in from home when it wasn't their turn.

Students were met with plastic desk dividers, masks, air purifiers, hand sanitizer and social distancing in their classrooms. "That [hybrid learning] was difficult. I think if we had to do it again, we would design it **SEE PAGE 7**

FROM PAGE 6 differently. Having more students at home than at school created a weird dynamic where more often than not I would give more help to the students online than those actually in front of me," AP Biology teacher John O'Verko said.

Berndt said that hybrid learning also altered classroom social dynamics. "I had to teach to a computer and also teach to kids in the classroom, so my time was split," she said. "But there was also this really weird social breakdown. Kids didn't know one another. So you had kids that would come in, but then they would stop coming in because they didn't know anybody. And you couldn't interact with anybody other than to shout from one end of the classroom to the other."

Sophomore Zain Chowdhry experienced online learning in fourth grade and hybrid learning in fifth grade. "I didn't pay attention in class, and the lack of social interactions caused me to be sad," he said. "I lost some friendships after Covid was done because I stopped talking to lots of people."

Lindsay said that it was difficult balancing virtual and in-person students. "You can't really pay attention to the ones who are online because you're not even sitting by your computer anymore at that point," she said. "The people who were at home could see what I was writing and could hear me. But I couldn't see them or hear them really, because they never spoke up. So it was very awkward."

"I say all the time that there is not enough money in the world to make me do that again," math teacher Abigail Goldstein said, referring to the difficulties of hybrid learning. "I wasn't helping any student effectively."

O'Verko said that he adopted Edpuzzle, online labs and Mastering Biology, a software used to access resources as well as assignments, during the pandemic and uses them to this day.

Goldstein said she implemented Google Classroom during the pandemic more than she had previously. Additionally, Goldstein and the math department discovered DeltaMath, an online tool that provides practice for mathematical concepts, a mainstay of Goldstein's classes during the post-Covid years.

When in-person classes resumed, students struggled to adjust. "Remote people had the flexibility to do work when they wanted to, and that didn't transfer well to a traditional school environment," O'Verko said. He said that his students are missing more assignments overall since the Covid-19 pandemic than prior to it.

Goldstein said she noticed more missing assignments following Covid. "I would say it got worse, but now we're on the upswing a little bit," she said.

Henoch said his incentive fell sharply during remote learning because the academic environment felt less meaningful. "My motivation went down a lot because it felt really easy for people to cheat or skip class, so it felt like the work I was doing didn't really matter," Henoch said.

English Department Chairwoman Emily Shrestha said that the "no zeroes" policy that the district implemented briefly post-pandemic was detrimental to students. She said that it set an expectation that students didn't have to engage in their work, but could still be successful — however, that success was not genuine.

Shakerite Reporter Wren Macklin contributed to this story.

Daniel Carroll

"It just meant that they moved on to the next class without actually learning any of the foundational skills that we needed them to. So the 'no zeros,' the '45s,' those sort of practices — I don't think actually helped students, except for in GPA," she said. "You still have to engage in the assignment. You still have to do something."

Shrestha said that students were most passive after the pandemic. "Like, students are waiting to receive the knowledge that teachers are attempting to give them. We all thought we were Dora the Explorer on an adventure, and the children were just blinking at us, right?"

English teacher Nalin Needham also said that he notices passivity in students. "I think that for a variety of reasons now there is a percentage of students — and I don't think this is unique to Shaker, I think it's everywhere — that are just constantly waiting to be told what to do and not exploring for themselves. If you don't give it to them, then they just kind of sit there and don't do anything," he said.

"I lost some friendships after Covid was done because I stopped talking to lots of people."

Zain Chowdry

One junior said she had "zero motivation" to study for tests. "Last year I was way more motivated, and this year it actually matters, and I'm not," she said. She said that some of her peers feel the stressed of academic pressure. "I think a lot of kids are overwhelmed with how much work there is," she said.

Shrestha said that before the pandemic, school expectations typically prioritized academic assignments above all else. After returning to in-person learning, however, she said SEE PAGE 8

THE SHAKERITE

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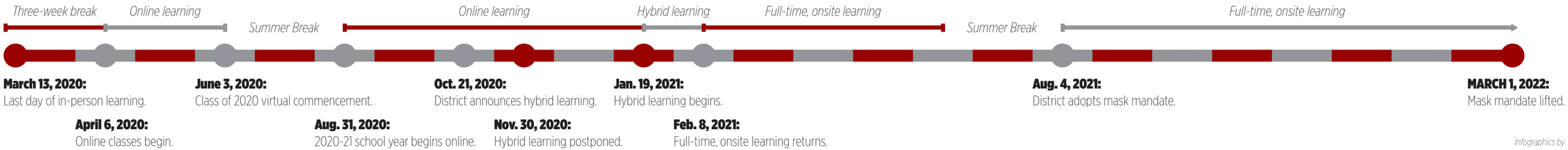


Infographics by Design Managing Editor Alison Teeter

FROM PAGE 6 that mental health awareness has increased. "Everyone is just much more in tune to how kids could be really struggling with things and feeling overwhelmed," she said.

Students' attitudes toward school after Covid coincide with a national rise in absenteeism. According to the U.S. Department of Education, districts across the country report that students are finding it harder to attend school regularly, complicating efforts to rebuild academic habits.

In Columbus City Schools, research from The Ohio State University's Crane Center found that students missed an average of 23 percent of school days during the 2022-23 year. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education reported that the Ohio rate of chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days, was 31 percent.

According to data provided by Dr. Christina Bauer, the Director of Student Data Systems and Accountability, Shaker Heights High school had a chronic absenteeism rate of 16.4 percent during the 2018-2019 school year, the last full school year before the pandemic. Chronic absenteeism decreased to 6.9 percent during the 2019-2020 school year, the beginning of the pandemic.

When the high school returned to full in-person learning during the 2021-2022 school year, chronic absenteeism skyrocketed to 43.3 percent of the student population. The following year it increased to 49.6 percent. Chronic absenteeism decreased during the 2023-2024 school year to 36.4 percent, but grew once again last school year to 39.4 percent.

The same study by the U.S. Department of Education showed a strong connection between attendance and a sense of belonging. Students who reported feeling connected to peers and adults at school attended more consistently and were more motivated to go to class and complete assignments. However, Luna said she often sees students walking in the hallways instead of going to class. "The days can be a lot, and they need breaks or aren't motivated or want to be in class," she said.

Lindsay said that post-Covid, many students don't see the incentive of attending class and think that "they don't actually have to be in school in order to be able to get everything out of it," she said. "If you think about your assignments, a lot of it is stuff that you do on your Chromebook. Or you're writing a paper, but you're doing the research online. You're going to internet resources. And with video tutorials available and stuff like that, people are relying less on the teacher."

"I think people believe that it's less important to be in school because they believe they have access to everything at home," she said.

Students complete work on their district-issued Chromebooks during a science class in September 2021, when students were required to wear masks for in-person learning. *Josh Levin*

"I think people just didn't get used to going to school in person again, so the mindset of not going to class felt normal."

Mason Henoch
freshman

Henoch said he notices more students avoiding class. "Almost every time I go to the bathroom or get water, I see people skipping class," he said. "I think people just didn't get used to going to school in person again, so the mindset of not going to class felt normal."

Berndt said that virtual learning during the pandemic contributed to the attendance decline. "If you're not required to turn on a camera and you're not really required to do much work, and you're not required to talk, and you're not used to an attendance policy — that's a lot of behavior that has been inadvertently taught that you now have to go back and try to correct," Berndt said.

Shrestha said that she has noticed a larger increase in tardiness than absenteeism. "It isn't necessarily that I have more kids absent per day or per week. But definitely the sort of urgency to get to a place on time is, I think, is something that suffered over Covid," she said.

Teachers and students also noticed changes in social norms after the pandemic. Needham said that during the initial reintroduction to in-person learning, social engagement was difficult. "I remember just being in rooms where it was painful. Kids would just sit there and stare at each other and not talk to each other," he said.

Henoch said that even now, some norms feel less formal than they did before the pandemic. "I feel like now I see a lot more phones and people not dressed as appropriately — for example pajamas and blankets — than before Covid," he said.

Berndt said that social skills had to be retaught after Covid. "People in general forgot societal norms, because they weren't practicing them. If you don't practice something, even a societal norm, you lose those skills," she said. "So skills were not being developed, they were not being improved, they were not progressing."

Some teathechers said that, following the pandemic, they adapted their lessons in order to accommodate academic and social changes. Needham said that post Covid, he often needs to anticipate "the need for providing a lot more structure, a lot more scaffolding and understanding." For example, he said, when assigning an essay, he provides more explicit directions and examples of what to write.

Berndt said that she also provides more structure and examples in her assignments. "When we're annotating a source, I don't assume that everybody knows how to annotate a source," she said.

Berndt said that post Covid, she often aims to reduce students' cognitive load. "I used to teach a lot of bonus stuff. And while it's cool, if it's adding to the overall cognitive load of a student, I have to step back and decide — even if I don't want to cut it — what big message do I want them to have?"

"So I've taken some things back. Not necessarily that I've diminished the curriculum, because we're still teaching what is required, but I do less of what I am personally interested in. I focus more on what kids are personally interested in and then I weave it into the lessons," Berndt said.

O'Verko said that he had to adapt his teaching to accommodate changes during the pandemic. Goldstein said she has altered her approach to fill gaps. "Skills for math weren't honed," she said.

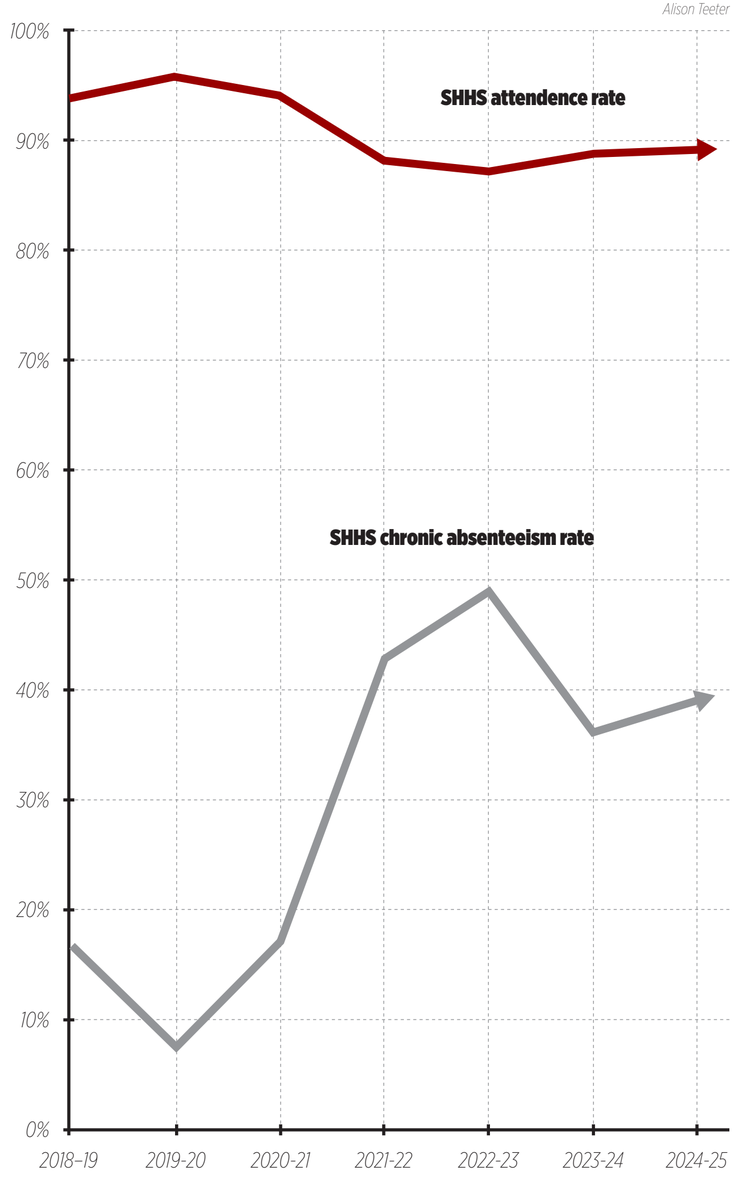
However, Shrestha said that with distance from the pandemic, social and academic skills are improving. She said that juniors and seniors who missed their middle school years, were more affected academically than freshmen who missed elementary school.

Needham also said that social skills are improving in recent years, particularly with younger students. "It made an impact, but there's been enough runway for kids to catch up," he said of freshmen, who first transitioned to virtual learning in second grade.

Shrestha also said that because of Covid, there is a better culture surrounding mental health. "It is a nicer environment to live in when you start with, 'Hey, how are you doing today?' And allow kids to say, 'Well, actually not that great.' To have that awareness, if the kids are willing to share and then the grownups are willing to ask," she said.

Shrestha said that it's important to adjust to new expectations as society — and students — change. "Kids change," Shrestha said. "The teachers were fussing about the kids in the '90s because they weren't the kids in the '80s and the '70s."

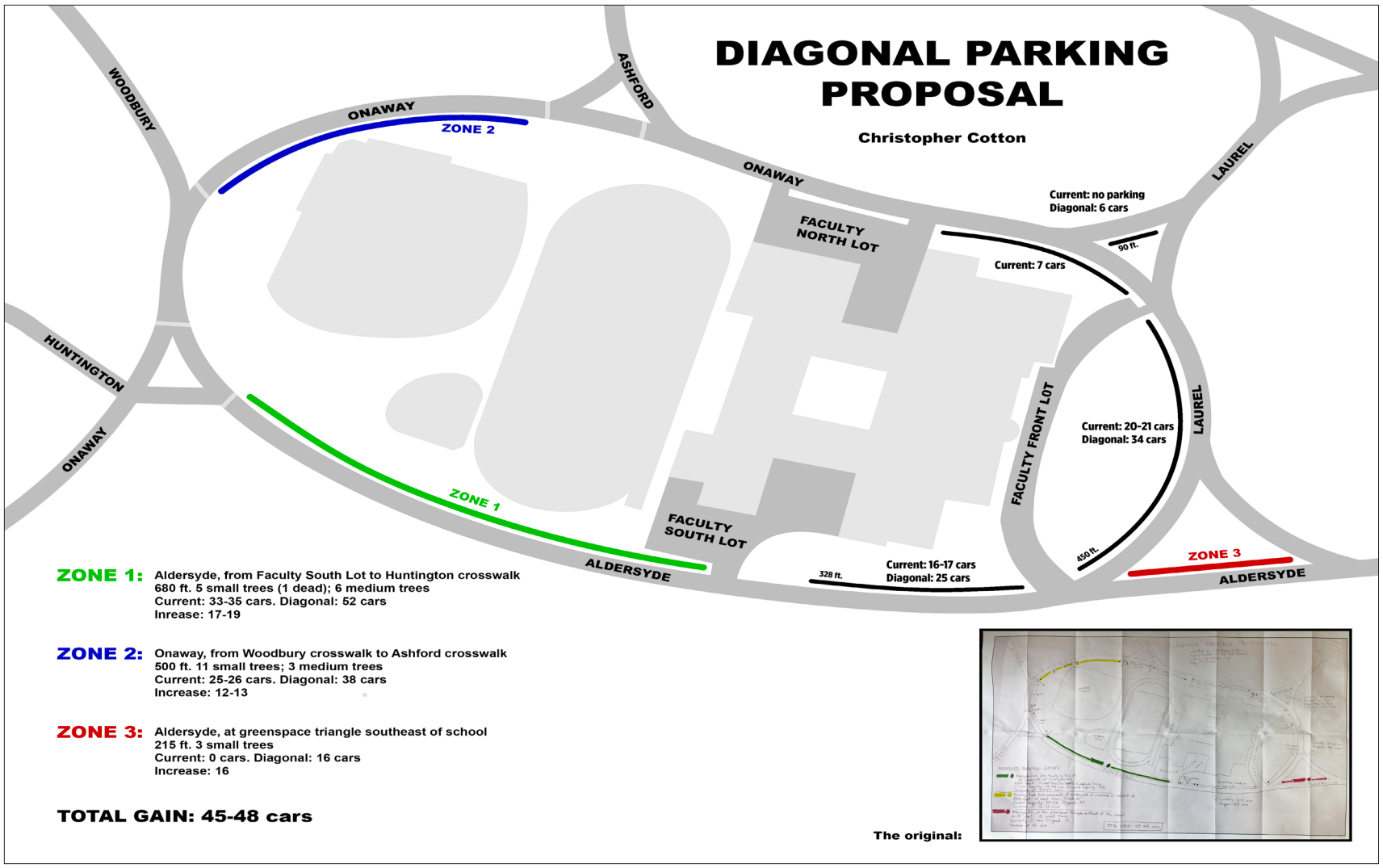
Said Shrestha, "Are we getting back to higher expectations for students in classes than we did in 2021, 2022? Absolutely. But are we back to what they were in 2017? No."



THE SHAKERITE

Dec. 15, 2025
Volume 96, Issue 3

THE ANSWER TO YOUR PARKING PROBLEMS



In the lower right corner, a photo of English teacher Chris Cotton's hand-drawn plan for diagonal parking on the oval. After hearing complaints from senior students about costly tickets, Cotton created this plan to increase the number of parking spaces available to students and visitors. The plan would employ diagonal, rather than parallel parking around the Oval. Cotton submitted the plan to Superintendent David Glasner in 2024. The district stated that the cost of widening the street is prohibitive. Senior Arabella Kielbasa supports Cotton's idea. "I vote yes! I think this is a good idea. We need more parking, and I think this could help with the idea of senior parking," she said. Senior Sofija Sullivan agreed. "I don't think it's something I or anyone else has thought of yet," she said.

Infographic by Alison Teeter

Teacher proposes a new angle on an old problem

VIJAYA SADLER
Campus & City Editor

Student parking frustrations are nothing new, but English teacher Chris Cotton has an angle on the problem.

Shaker Heights High School provides no dedicated parking for students. Instead, student drivers fill the roads around the oval — Onaway Road, Aldersyde Drive and Laurel Road — or park on Parkland Drive beside the administration building. Three separate staff lots surround the school, but students are prohibited from using them.

Cotton

In 2024, Cotton sent a proposal to Superintendent David Glasner, arguing that accessible spots for students, staff and visitors were too few. "There is not enough parking at the high school. Every student who drives, every teacher who drives, and every parent who drives to the school for events will agree," he wrote.

"I think we have the space to make more room, and to make more parking spaces," he said. He proposes creating diagonal parking because it "doesn't take up more space than what we have."

Cotton's idea is to convert the oval's parallel parking into diagonal parking. Drivers who park diagonally typically park at an angle of 45 degrees, which accomodates more cars.

"I measured it out, and we would only have to cut about four feet of the inside of the oval," he said. "I don't think that's a big loss. We would have to take out a few trees, or move a few trees, but that's not too hard."

Glasner said the district reviewed the 2024 proposal and appreciated the work Cotton put in to craft it. "It is important to note that moving to diagonal parking would require some degree of street widening, which can be both an extensive and expensive project," he said.

In his proposal, Cotton argued that the parking problem "exacerbates other problems," including tardiness and a general lack of belonging. The lack of available space, he wrote, also makes it difficult for teachers who work in multiple buildings to reach their high school classes on time.

Cotton said that parallel parking around the oval "is a waste of space."

"It's not an efficient way to have parking, and I think that the school ought to have more parking spaces. Because there aren't enough."

Students are on board with this issue. Senior Sofija Sullivan said that parking should be a top priority as the district considers high school renovations. "A student parking lot should be number one priority to prevent crashes," she said. "Most students have hit each other around the oval."

Junior Delaney Willis said her car has been hit while parked on the oval. "One day a car backed into mine," Willis said.

"There is not enough parking at the high school. Every student who drives, every teacher who drives, and every parent who drives to the school for events will agree."
Chris Cotton

Senior Arabella Kielbasa said that she often struggled to find space, even when arriving by 7:45 am. "Sometimes the cars were backed up so much that I almost parked in the crosswalk," she said. "I haven't gotten hit, but I know many other students who have."

Cotton's proposal also referenced previous attempts to address parking. He said staff lectures on punctuality and police ticketing have had little effect. During a 2018 episode of construction, the district offered 34 temporary parking spaces at City Hall — a .7 mile, 14-minute walk. Cotton said that the long walks and limited options make students more likely to arrive late, especially seniors who depend on driving.

Cotton said senior students helped inspire the proposal. "I teach a lot of seniors, and I hear them complain and talk about the tickets they get. Sometimes the tickets they receive are really aggressive," he said.

A student parking ticket issued Nov. 12 listed a $25 fine if paid within 30 days, increasing to $100 if paid after 30 days. Handicap zone violations cost $100, rising to $300.

Cotton said that lectures alone will never fix the issue. "If you don't have enough parking spots, it doesn't matter if people are on time or late or early. You're still going to run out of parking spots."

The district says it will continue to work with the city to find improvements. "We will keep Mr. Cotton's proposal in mind as we move forward with our Master Facilities Plan, which will eventually address the high school campus," Glasner said.

Junior Harper Thornton develops a pottery piece during Christina Stouffer's ninth-period Ceramics class Dec. 5

Emma Barker

DON'T LET AI MAKE CREATIVITY OBSOLETE

'Rite Idea

When AI takes over art, passion and emotion cease to exist in the places where they are most meant to thrive.

The Editorial Board

You're listening to music, but the lyrics — robotic and artificial – don't sound quite right.

You're reading a book, but you feel like you've already read the generic, cliche plot a thousand times before.

You're watching a movie, but the actress looks uncanny, and not quite human.

This is the world of AI-generated art forms — a world that we catapult further into each time somebody uses ChatGPT to generate a funny song.

Sure, it might be fun to laugh at AI-generated art from time to time. Last month, The Shakerite reviewed eight songs generated by AI country "artist" Breaking Rust, poking fun at the generic composition and cliche lyrics ("They say, 'Slow down, boy, don't go too fast'/But I ain't never been one to live in the past/I keep looking forward, never looking back/with a worn-out hat and a six-string strap."

But the Breaking Rust song that includes those lyrics, "Walk My Walk," reached No. 1 on Billboard's Country Digital Song Sales chart. AI art is nothing to laugh at when it upstages human creation and replaces real artists.

AI is advancing in artistic spaces without guardrails. In November 2024, an AI-generated portrait of Alan Turing — a British mathematician – sold at an auction for $1.08 million. This year, Xicoia, the AI division of production company Particle6 Group, created an AI-generated "actress" named Tilly Norwood. According to an article by the New York Post, her creators spent hours "laboring over her name, ensuring it sounded authentically British and universally unique," and designed her image to "resemble that of a beautiful, whitish-looking woman who'd resonated with global audiences."

These creations are designed to replace human talent; they are designed to replace the passion and dedication of working artists with a cheaper, quicker solution.

Reading. Watching movies. Touring museums, writing stories, playing instruments, creating — these are pursuits that emerge from emotion. AI may produce grammatically-correct writing and catchy songs (sometimes), but it can't produce emotion.

Robots don't possess the lived experiences that humans do. When AI takes over art, passion and emotion cease to exist in the places where they are most meant to thrive.

We even see this erasure in our own school. A new district document on AI, titled the "Artificial Intelligence in Education: Guidelines for Teacher/Administrator Use," states that students may "harness generative AI to spark creativity across diverse subjects, including writing, visual arts, and music composition." But the phrase "using AI to spark creativity" is a paradox. Using AI to brainstorm ideas is a rejection of creativity. It takes away a fundamental part of the artistic process — using your own ideas and experiences to create something personalized and unique to you.

Students don't need a chat bot to spit out a list of starting points for their essay, or a premise for their project. They can use their brains, just as they always have. Through these guidelines, the district is allowing and encouraging our generation to sacrifice their creativity for AI.

Compose a corny song. Draw a bad sketch. Write a story for no reason other than to create. Stop asking ChatGPT to brainstorm for you. Stop asking it to compose, write, paint and act. We can only slow the flood of AI generation by combatting it with human creation.

THE SHAKERITE

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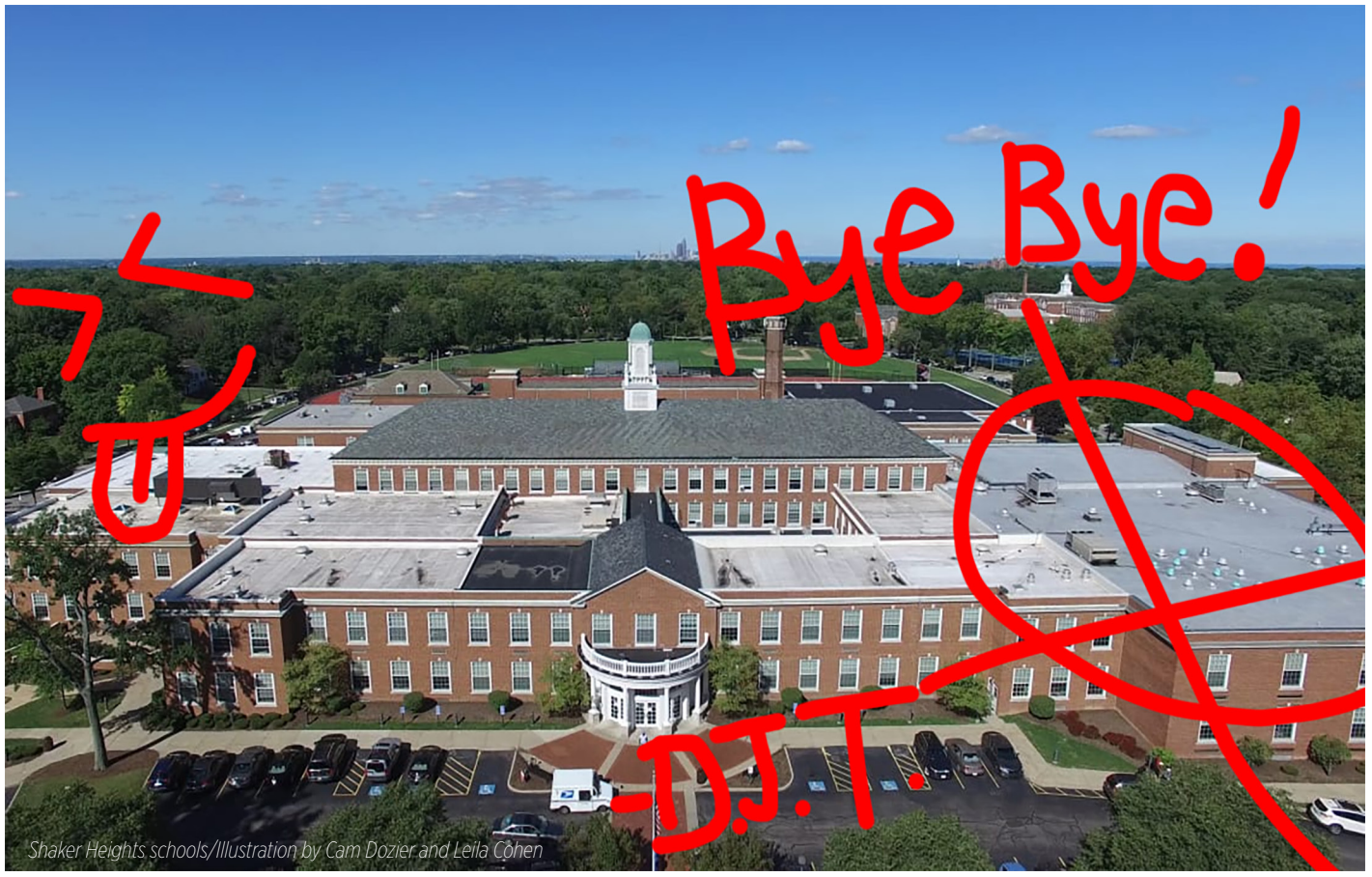


Shaker Heights schools/Illustration by Cam Dozier and Leila Cohen

The White House released this official image of President Trump's plans for the high school's east wing, which will be replaced by a big, beautifl ballroom.

TRUMP PLANS EAST WING RENOVATION

SPENCER ZBANEK
Raider Zone Editor

President Donald J. Trump skipped his regular golf tee time last Thursday to personally approve blueprints for what he called "the greatest, most elegant ballroom ever built in a high school, probably the world, besides my own," according to sources closest to the project.

Construction will reportedly begin a week from now on what used to be the large auditorium, science wing and Egress of Shaker Heights High School. The new facility, named after the school's principal, will be called The Wyatt Grand Shaker Ballroom.The ballroom will feature imported Italian marble, 41 chandeliers and a sound system that only plays MGK and Kid Cudi.

Principal Isaiah Wyatt told reporters that he is grateful but confused. "It will be beautiful, sure," Wyatt said at a press conference in front of White House correspondents. "But we were really hoping for funding for a working heating system, or to paint the lockers red. With all the cuts, it will be hard to pitch ballroom dancing classes to the district," Wyatt said.

Trump defended the decision at his own press conference held Nov. 27 in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room. "This is going to be really tremendous for Shaker Heights. Incredible dancing, very classy education," he said. "They tell me this place is full of smart kids, genius kids, the best and now they'll have somewhere to learn about luxury."

Reports indicate that the chandelier budget alone surpassed the school's annual budget. Wyatt said he does not know how the district will purchase ladders tall enough to reach the millions of required lightbulbs. "We've already had to cut ELL and Quidditch programs in the past years. I think we might need to pass another levy for the ballroom," he said.

Students hoped the district would host prom in the new ballroom, but the facility is booked solid. Trump plans to use the venue for the Trump Freedom Gala, featuring the high school jazz band, a planetarium show and his formal endorsement of Vivek Ramaswamy for Ohio governor.

After FBI director Kash Patel saw the blueprints for the facility, he expressed awe. "Only President Trump could bankroll a ballroom in a city I've never heard of," Patel said. "It's breathtaking. Marble floors, chandeliers and mirrors everywhere so Mr. President can admire himself from every angle. It's completely unnecessary, but flawless."

Patel said he was caught off guard when aides told him that Terry Rozier is from Shaker Heights. "The basketball player? From here? Maybe I'll fast-track his pardon application. Anyone from a city getting a Trump ballroom deserves consideration."

Trump said he doesn't plan on stopping with the high school ballroom. "I was walking around, and I noticed the south gym; nobody is using it, it's a total waste, very sad," Trump said.

"So maybe, just maybe, we build the greatest tower Ohio's ever seen. We'll call it the Glasner Tower. People will talk about it forever. It'll be taller than anything in the state, believe me. Or, you know what? Maybe I just put a big, beautiful statue of myself right in that courtyard. It's so plain, so boring, needs a little class, a little beauty," he said.

Trump waved off Shakerite questions about the cost of the ballroom project. "Look, I love the kids, I really do, but journalists? Not my favorite people," he said. "Always asking about budgets, about costs. Very negative. Nobody ever asks, 'Mr. President, how did you pick such beautiful chandeliers?' That's the real story. That's what people want to know."

After White House correspondents showed Wyatt the blueprints while standing in what used to be the science wing, Wyatt began brainstorming solutions for the displaced classes. "I guess we'll figure out where to teach chemistry," he said.

"Maybe the parking lot."

Trump called the project his greatest contribution to education. The school is currently accepting donations for textbooks.

We Can't Let Stress Take Over Our Lives

I have found myself engrossed in the book "Ikigai." Written by Héctor García and Francesc Miralles, it educates readers about generational Japanese values and ways of life. In it, the authors intend to uncover the hacks to longevity — how to live a long, balanced, happy and successful life.

Barely 50 pages in, however, I cannot help but notice the prominence of stress. When reading a book such as this one, especially as a sophomore in high school, I become immediately and concerningly aware of how much stress we put on ourselves.

TATE POLATZ
Opinion Writer

According to The American Institute of Stress, more than 54 percent of female teens and 43 percent of male teens reported feeling stressed daily. This stress comes in two packages: the good — eustress — and the bad. Eustress — acute or short-term stress — is the body's natural survival mechanism of flight or fight, which can improve mental and physical performance and immune protection. The fine line is the drop into chronic stress — the stress that goes on for months or even years.

But why does stress occur at such significant levels among teenagers?

For our generation, stress takes another form: heightened insecurity about imperfections, the outcome of growing up under the intense influence of social media. Social media creates unrealistic, idealized images of life and success. While we may consciously reject what we are seeing when we are scrolling, this issue seeps into us and into society.

So what? Why does this matter? Stanford Medicine warns that enduring chronic stress can defeat our natural abilities to remain resilient. Teenagers don't realize how the habits we create now will impact our adult selves. Stress has unique ways of manifesting, including breakouts, irregular sleep patterns, mental illnesses, cardiovascular problems and a weakened immune system.

People miss the importance of simple existence. This is not in the sense that our lives have to be boring, but the key to a balanced, successful and happy life is more attainable than we think. It begins with the mind. Identify your passions, accept what you cannot change, and slow down. Achieve flow through practices of gratitude, journaling, exercise, spending time outdoors, maintaining strong relationships, prioritizing sleep — or anything you find works.

There are stressful forces that we cannot control — school, work, even what you see while scrolling. So put your phone down. Read it, don't read it, but don't internalize. Ideas and problems do not have to be a burden. The greatest strength within our minds is the ability to filter thoughts and choose what can hold priority.

JV Men's basketball coach Brittney Matuschek directs players during practice Dec. 9 in the north gym.

Matuschek Takes JV Helm in a Shaker First

ANDREW MULLEN
Raider Zone Reporter

Brittney Matuschek is the first woman ever to coach a SHHS men's basketball team.

Matuschek is the new men's JV coach. She began coaching girls' basketball in 2014 at a middle school in the Parma school district.

A year later she became the freshman women's coach at her alma mater, Parma Valley Forge High School, where she played varsity basketball for three years from 2006 to 2009.

"I was one of their all-time leading scorers," Matuschek said.

She became women's JV coach a year later in 2015, and took on the varsity women's head coach post in 2018. Matuschek led the Valley Forge women's team to its first winning season in a decade.

She led the Hawken Upper School women's varsity team during the 2022-23 season before moving on to Westlake High School, where she led the varsity women's team to two district final appearances and won the Great Lakes Conference in 2024.

The Raider JV post is not Matuschek's first time coaching male players, however. While leading women's high school teams, she also coached men's teams in AAU programs.

Varsity head coach Danny Young said Matuschek is the first woman to coach an SHHS men's basketball team. "And I believe she's the first in Cleveland," Young said.

Young said he is excited about adding Matuschek to the staff. He said he originally aimed to hire an alumnus of the program to coach the JV team.

"I had plenty of alums that are volunteers, but none of them really wanted to commit. So I just started trying to think outside the box," he said.

Young said Matuschek stood out as a candidate. "Aggressiveness and knowing what she wanted and seeing the value of how she can add capacity to my staff was very attractive," he said.

Matuschek said that she adds experience to the coaching staff, and that her perspective is uniquely helpful to understanding and nurturing players. "I bring a lot of knowledge. I've coached thousands of basketball games," she said.

"But I'm pretty hard on them. I don't want to baby the boys, but I do show a compassionate side that maybe is missing in the competitive world of boys' high school basketball."

Matuschek, who led the Westlake women's varsity team to district finals twice, is the first woman to coach a Raider men's team.

Matuschek said that the student athletes are open to having her as a coach. "They know I have good experience and I have a proven track record. They're very respectful. Every time, you know, I say something it's always a 'Yes, ma'am,' " she said.

"Developing relationships with them, to me, is no different than any other player I've ever coached — whether it's a female or a male athlete, you still want to create that meaningful relationship with them, and I think we're all off to a good start so far."

Junior small forward Tristan Westland said he recognizes Matuschek's experience and her goal to develop the program. "I think Coach Brit is very experienced, and you can tell by how she coaches young players that she really wants to see them succeed and grow to be the varsity-level athlete," he said.

Matuschek said that her experience as a head coach gives her an advantage in working with Young.

"I have the experience. I know what he does on a day-to-day basis, so really the program has two people who have been head coach. I think that's valuable because I know what he needs. I echo his program philosophies to the team because like I said, I know what's expected out of a JV coach," she said.

Young said Matuschek often notices things that he doesn't. "She might say, 'Coach, you might wanna look at ball handling, you might want to look at how hard they're cutting, you might wanna look at the way they execute the play,'" he said.

"I've been around this landscape for 34 years. I've played every school — I've never seen a female coach on the boy's side."

Danny Young

Matuschek has already made an impression on the rest of the staff. Young said that she has done things that no male coaches have done. "We have this office space in the north gym. It was totally junky, unorganized, not together. She came in on a Sunday. She said, 'Coach, I'll go do it,' and she cleaned a whole office. The office looks amazing. Like, I got all these male coaches, you know, that work for me for, like, 15 years. Not one of them ever volunteered to clean the office," Young said.

Matuschek said she left Westlake High School when her family expanded. "My fiancé and I just had a baby girl in February," she said. "I decided to step away from head coaching because it was a lot."

Matuschek's fiancé, Terrence Rose, is an assistant coach for the Raider men's varsity team. Matuschek said she is enjoying coaching alongside him. "Shaker's also very welcoming to the family aspect. It's nice that we still get to spend that time together," she said.

Matuschek said she wants her young daughter to see the same opportunities she has had. "I'm excited to show her that she can do things that nobody's ever done before you," she said.

Said Matuschek, "Typically what used to be a male-dominated thing is now becoming pretty big in the women's world, so it's nice. Just show her that you can do anything."`

THE SHAKERITE

Dec. 15, 2025
Volume 96, Issue 3

CONNOR MAYHUGH

Q&A

If you had to pick two team members to help you survive on a random island, who would they be and why?

Dylan Ersepke because he is hilarious, and Sebby Juan for his smarts.

What's your coach's go-to phrase that you've heard a million times?

"Stay positive!"

Would you rather play with no skates or no water breaks?

No water breaks.

If your highlight reel had background music, what song would you pick?

"Walk It Talk It" by Migos because it is the most hype song I've ever heard.

Who would play you in a movie about you?

Young Robert Downey Jr. because he is so charming.

What's your secret talent that has nothing to do with sports?

I'm incredible at Fortnite.

If you had a nickname like a WWE wrestler, what would yours be?

If I had a WWE nickname, it'd be "Mayday."

Would you rather play in a blizzard or in 100-degree heat?

Blizzard; it'd be hard to play hockey in 100-degree heat.

What's the worst pump-up advice you've ever heard?

"Go hit these guys hard." It isn't good pump-up advice because I don't like hitting people.

R.O.M

Walk me through your pregame warmup.

Dynamic warmup with the team after arriving at the rink, which includes stretching, exercises and playing the game "Tips," which I normally win.

What do you eat and drink the day of a game?

Dunkin': coffee, sandwich, donut.

What's the most embarrassing thing you've done at practice?

The most embarrassing thing I've done at practice is fall in front of the whole team when demonstrating a drill.

Do you have lucky socks?

Yes. They are one of many superstitions I have, along with exactly where I sit in the locker room, being the last guy out of the locker room, and many more private superstitions.

Games	Plus/Minus
8	+5
Goals	Plus/minus tracks how many goals scored for and against while the player has been on the ice. The Raiders have scored five more goals than they have allowed while Mayhugh is playing so far this season.
7	
Assists	**Penalty Minutes**
5	10
PPG	
1.5	

JOSIE KUHEL

R.O.M

Q&A

What's your coach's go-to phrase that you've heard a million times?
Eric [Peterson] always tells my teammates and me, "Listen to the words coming out of my mouth" when my teammates are distracted and don't listen to our set.

What was your worst pre-game experience ever?
My sophomore year at sectionals, the fire alarm went off multiple times during the meet, which made the whole experience very memorable in a good and bad way.

What's the most embarrassing thing you've done at practice?
I have belly-flopped off of the blocks a couple of times at practice.

What's your secret talent that has nothing to do with sports?
I can play "Piano Man" by Billy Joel on the harmonica.

Walk me through your pregame warmup.
Before our warmup, my teammates and I do dryland exercises, which include the coordination series, miniband series and animal series to get our bodies warmed up before we enter the water for our warmup. When we get in the water, we try to swim every stroke. We kick, pull, do drills and, at the end of warmup, we go off the blocks two or three times to get some speed work in.

What's your go-to victory meal?
Anything from Chick-fil-A.

Do you have lucky socks?
I have lucky goggles. The better I swim with them in practice, the better I hopefully swim at a meet.

What do you eat and drink on meet days?
If the meet is in the morning, I usually have avocado toast, eggs, a banana and electrolytes. I snack on fruit and protein bars throughout meets and will have an energy chew 15 minutes before I swim.

100 breaststroke
1:07.42

500 freestyle
5:28.09

Qualified for:

- Division I 2025 OHSAA Swiming and Diving State Tournament
- USA Speedo Sectionals
- Northeast Ohio District Championships (3x)
- GCC Northeast District Honor Roll

THE SHAKERITE

Dec. 15, 2025
Volume 96, Issue 3

STAT OF THE MONTH

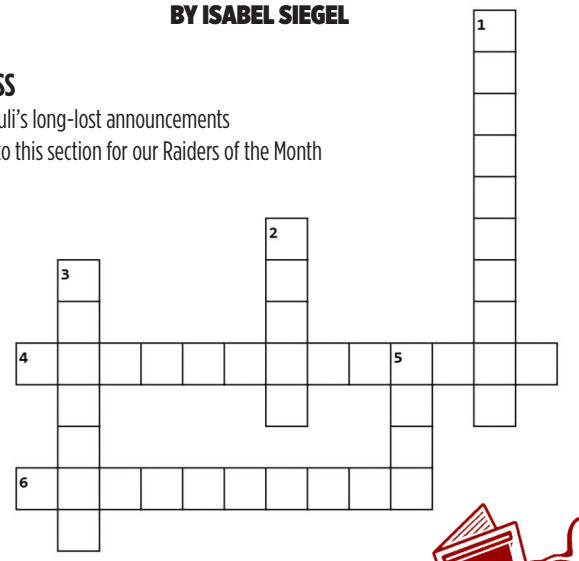
BY EMMA BARKER AND VARNIKA TAKHI

OPS

THE ONE-PAGE SHAKERITE

What's the 'Rite Word?

BY ISABEL SIEGEL

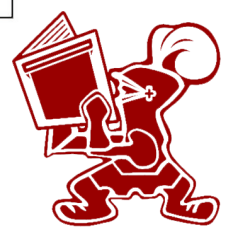


ACROSS

4. Mr. Juli's long-lost announcements
6. Flip to this section for our Raiders of the Month

DOWN

1. Seniors, only six months 'till . . .
2. Our favorite Raider
3. Ice down the toilet, crayons in the freezer
5. Be___, be respectful and be responsible



*solution below

Cheers & Jeers

Winter Break Edition

Cheers to two weeks off!
Jeers to procrastinating homework until Jan. 4, 2026.

Cheers to snowdays that happen during autumn.
Jeers to Google Classroom and snow-day assignments.

Cheers to hot chocolate with marshmallows.
Jeers to tongues so scalded that you can't taste your next three meals.

Cheers to holiday movies.
Jeers to the lead character coming home for the holidays after moving to the big city to find herself and bringing along her billionaire fiance, but when she gets to her childhood home, her high school sweetheart is doing farm work for her dad, and now she has to choose between the devastatingly handsome billionaire who will give her everything and the rugged high school sweetheart who never stopped loving her, even after she dumped him after prom.

READ A BOOK OVER BREAK

Breakfast of Champions by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
Everyone needs Vonnegut in their lives.

The Thousandth Floor by Katharine McGee
Dystopian version of Gossip Girl

Better Than the Movies by Lynn Painter
Best rom-com couple in a book

Holidays on Ice by David Sedaris
The life of a Macy's elf, and other odd stories

2026 Shakerite Staff New Year's Resolutions

Graham Gurney
"Be nicer to my sister, Sloan. No, I take that back; she's mean to me."

Claire Joyce
"Be more productive."
Why? "To get into college."

Leila Cohen
"Procrastinate less."
Why? "Ask me later."

Jaryn Marcus
"Make money."
Why? "$$$"

Natalie Sekicky
"Finish my dissertation."
Why? "I have been trying to since 1997."

Natalie Better
"Get a filter."
Why? "Because . . . if you know, you know."

Maizy Machmer-Wessels
"Get more aura."
Why? "I'm losing more aura trying to answer this question."

Alison Teeter
"Escape the country."
Why? "I'm done."

Lily Pollino
"No more surgeries."
Why? "They hurt."

SHAKERITE
POP QUIZ

How many years has Mr. Slovikovski been a teacher at SHHS?

A. 67 years
B. 25 years
C. 38 years
D. 46 years

*answer below

Raider Rant

Furniture of Pain

BY NATALIE BETTER

School desks are an insecapable nightmare. My back hurts, my butt hurts, everything hurts. There's barely space for your laptop, let alone binders, water bottles and notebooks. Somehow, my backpack takes up half the space, too. Good luck trying to pull a 3-inch APUSH binder out without knocking over your 40-ounce Free Sip Owala water bottle, all while trying to focus through stabbing pain. Knees collide with the edge. Elbows cramp. And don't even think about stretching. Whoever designed these desks clearly hates comfort. School is hard enough. Why does sitting make it feel like torture, too?

Micro Feature

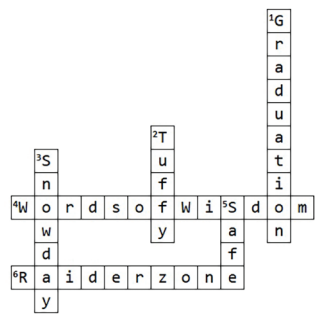
Lara Mullen

BY CLAIRE JOYCE AND MAIZY MACHMER-WESSELS

If you've ever arrived at class and found a substitute teacher there, you've probably met Lara Mullen, mother of Jonathan Mullen ('20) and junior Andrew Mullen ('27). She has worked here since Jonathan was in high school. After a career in art museums, including the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh and the Cleveland Museum of Art, she gained more than 30 years of history and art history experience. "My previous career had been in art museums, but I really had been teaching during that time as well," she said. She applies that experience when stepping in for social studies and English teachers who are absent. She also enjoys following and supporting the Raider field hockey team. She said, "One of the most fun parts of this is that I've been here while my kids have been here, and not just my kids, but also their friends."

Pop Quiz Answer ? **C. 38 years**

Crossword Solution



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